



## World War II - The Louisiana Maneuvers



Bermuda Bridge



General George Patton

In 1940, World War II was well under way in Europe and Asia. The United States Army, aware that their involvement was imminent, realized that they were vastly unprepared. In order to provide officers and soldiers with a simulated battle experience, Army planners conceived the Louisiana Maneuvers.

The Louisiana Maneuvers served as a training ground for our nation’s generals. Among those taking part were Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton and Omar Bradley. The lessons learned were put to the ultimate test 18 months later when the United States entered World War II.

In May of 1940, 70,000 troops were deployed in Northwest Louisiana. The troops were divided into two opposing forces on either side of the Sabine River. The defending forces dug in along a line stretching from Leesville to Mansfield, and Alexandria was designated as their “capital.” Local residents came out in droves to observe these “war games”. People would lie on the banks of the Cane River and watch the planes roar overhead.

### The Battle Of Bermuda Bridge

The Louisiana Maneuvers produced some local legends and one of the most endearing and enduring stories took place on Oakland Plantation.

In September of 1940 the “Blue Army” was training along Cane River. As they reached Bermuda Bridge the sound of light artillery rang out from the woods. The battle raged for about thirty minutes, with the Blue army firing blanks, setting up smoke screens, and bringing in a howitzer to defend against what they thought was a large Red army force.

An umpire finally came to investigate (impartial Army officers observed each engagement and determined the victor) and discovered the “enemy” holding up their 500 car convoy was in fact three young boys.

In front of their family plantation’s general store, the three Prud’homme boys- Alphonse, 14, Kenneth, 12 and Mayo, 9, excitedly reloaded their new carbide-gas, foot-long, toy cannon.

The commander of the Blue army would never lose another battle. His defeat at the “Battle of Bermuda Bridge” would be the only blemish on the stellar record of General George

Sources: Collin, Elizabeth (2009). Patton “Bested” At Battle of Bermuda Bridge”. Retrieved from <http://www.army.mil/-news/2009/08/21/26400-patton-bested-at-the-battle-of-bermuda-bridge/>; Gable, Christopher R. “1940 Maneuvers: Prelude to Mobilization.” in *Camp Beauregard and Central Louisiana 1940-1945*. (Louisiana National Guard Public Affairs Office, 1994), 31-40; Isbell, Terry “The Battle for the Bayous: The Louisiana Maneuvers,” *Old Natchitoches Parish Magazine* (No. 2, 1997): 2-7; Samson, Jerry Purvis “Studying War: Central Louisiana and the Training of United States Troops 1939-1945.” in *Camp Beauregard and Central Louisiana 1940-1945*. (Louisiana National Guard Public Affairs Office, 1994), 7-14; Photos courtesy of the Library of Congress.